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ABSTRACT

This collection of 9 papers presented at a conference on parent involvement in the schools focuses on topics such as communication among teachers, children, and parents; actual parent participation in the educational program; and parental control of the educational program. Papers included were: (1) "Establishing Effective Communications between Parents and Teachers"; (2) "Developing Communication Skills"; (3) "A Successful Parent-School Relationship"; (4) "Community and School Relationship--A Partnership"; (5) "Parents as Teachers of Parents"; (6) "Leadership Training for Parents"; (7) "The Parent Cooperative School"; (8) "The Parent-Established Schools"; and (9) "The Parent and the Public School." (SE)

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Proceedings

The Workshop on Parent Involvement

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ESTABLISHING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS
BETWEEN PARENT AND TEACHERS

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You can see in the program that the title of my talk is "Establishing Effective Communications Between Parent and Teachers." I feel as though the title should be abbreviated to "Between Parent and Teacher" and my name be Haim Ginott. You may know that this year Dr. Ginott has written another book with the title Teacher and Child: A Book for Parents and Teachers.¹ Parts of his book touch specifically upon our topic having to do with effective parent-teacher communication.

The basic reason for being together is our sharing a concern for children. Although we are focusing upon adult communication--as parents and teachers--we can't lose sight of the fact that we have in common a direct involvement with children.

My approach to this subject touches upon three major topics. The first is attitudes that affect communication. The second relates to parent-teacher communication and how it benefits the child. The last concerns communication skills.

First, let's consider two essential attitudes having to do with effective communication. One is reliance on people's basic good will, and the other is hopefulness about resolving differences. There's much good will that we should be able to see as obvious but can't. For example, how many parents and teachers do you think set out to make

children's lives miserable? Our initial response might be that many do. Actually, the number is minuscule. Adults want what's best for children. They needn't be faulted for having bad intentions. We can count on their goodwill to this extent. It's not that much different between adults. Husbands and wives, at least in the beginning, aren't plotting to destroy one another. In our working relationships the prevailing attitude is not simply "dog eat dog."

This goodwill does not rest on naive optimism. Rather it is an optimism of awareness. In the mature personality, as contrasted to the paranoid, we can expect a philosophy of meeting the other person with a minimum of preconceived ideas. From the mature personality we can count on being met halfway until the need for wariness is demonstrated. The paranoid holds the belief that the other person is out to get him. The paranoid way is like a code of justice that considers others guilty until they prove themselves innocent.

When Paul Tillich² spoke of awareness as being open, he touched upon basic trust and hopefulness. He described the process as an "opening up," being receptive and responsive to what happens next. To do well in communicating, we must count on relating to others with an attitude characterized by trust, openness, and hopefulness. Hope is like an island of safety we can return to in those times when we despair about resolving differences in a mutually satisfying way.

This does not mean, however, that effective communication is characterized by a state of bliss. Intense feelings may be expressed and there may be conflicts having the character of a death struggle rather than problem solving. So long as there is an underlying good will and hopefulness about preserving, restoring, or redefining the relationship

rather than destroying it, there is a chance for positive communication.

For the second topic it might be instructive to assume a naive point of view and address ourselves to the question, "How can improved relationships between parents and teachers benefit the child?"

For our children's sake, let's be happy and mature adults. Children profit from being with happy people. Consequently, it pays to think seriously about our own needs and to see the wisdom of helping ourselves. We often are burdened with unnecessary hassles for lack of effective communication skills. We may impulsively take on problems that don't belong to us. For example, the parent who is bombarded with a teacher's personal complaints about the principal need not herself take issue with the principal. In fact, the parent may just as well not be taken in as a sympathizer and become infected with the teacher's frustrations.

It is easy for most of us to jump to conclusions. Even a passing remark can trigger a chain of associations that generates intense and inappropriate feelings. Imagined insults have led to irreconcilable conflicts. What begins as fantasy may become reality.

A special word needs to be said about anger. When we speak of the importance of expressing feelings, we typically zero in on anger as though it's the most significant of our feelings. It is not. Anger is not a primary feeling. It usually follows very quickly our experiencing a hurt, fear, anxiety, or disappointment. When driving on the freeway at 60 m.p.h. and having another car suddenly cut across my path from the neighboring lane, I find myself saying something like, "I hope your wheels fall off, you idiot!" I'm intensely angry but what I really felt initially was fear.

Effective communication requires that one be courageous. It demands going to the front, getting on the firing line, getting to where the

action is. This allows for clarification, definition, and reconciliation of both imagined and real differences. We can use our resources constructively through better communication. Happy people are not only nice to be around--they improve mental health.

For our children's sake, let's learn from one another. Parents and teachers have different vantage points for making observations of children. Involvements of parent-child and teacher-child are in a number of ways radically different. We need these different perspectives for improving our knowledge of developmental principles. These serve as important guidelines for checking ourselves on expectations for our children as they mature. Building this body of knowledge is a continuing process because change is constant.

Knowledge comes from understanding. It is paradoxical that understanding children is so hard for adults who were once children themselves. It's an example where having been one doesn't help to know one--or so it seems. It's just not easy to recollect the trials and tribulations of our own childhood. We may only half-consciously recall early childhood memories. In so doing we may elaborate or otherwise distort our experiences so as to lose touch with the real past. However, in spite of the barriers, it's possible to restore a more complete and accurate picture of what it was like for us as children. This is important for our understanding of children in the here and now. A psychologist asked by a parent for an informative book on children responded, "The best book is yourself--use your own childhood as a resource."

Understanding another is not simple. It is something of a reciprocal process of understanding self, understanding the other, and being understandable. Knowing ourselves better helps us to understand other adults

and children as well. In being armed with knowledge, we can reduce the dangers of ignorance.

There is a danger is our perceiving other adults as things rather than as persons. George Bach's³ idea of "thinging" describes a process of seeing people in functional terms. We see them only for what they can do for us. The janitor keeps our waste baskets empty, the floors swept, and the chairs lined up. A particular parent can make points with the superintendent because she plays bridge every Tuesday with his wife.

There is an even greater danger in thinging our children. We see them as objects to be possessed. A child "belongs" to us as his parents, or he is "my" pupil. As an object he is expected to be changed, adjusted, molded. For instance, a teacher lectures a parent about her child not keeping up with the class in arithmetic. The teacher seems indignant that the child doesn't perform at the class "norm," evidently losing sight of individual differences.

It would be helpful for adults to apply to themselves what we know about educating children. We nurture self-directed action in children to achieve genuine participation. We give children an opportunity for decision making.

If we are in positions of authority, we need to recognize the need for being flexible, and for modifying the institutions that are set up to serve people's needs. We can change the design of our school buildings to make them look less like hospitals or prisons. We can change the curricula. We can open our school doors to the community.

For our children's sake, let's clarify our roles. It is important to understand our role and the other's role (whether teacher or parent) to be free in a relationship that is constructive for the child. Most of

us must struggle with stereotypes. When dealing with others we tend to respond with an image rather than the reality of what "teacher" is like or what "parent" is like. A common problem for parents is to overidentify with their own school and teacher experiences, losing perspective of the current situation. For example, initial school phobias have much to do with parents' inability to deal with their own unresolved separation anxieties. For teachers it may be turned around by overidentification with their own parent-child experiences so as not to deal with parents realistically. For example, a teacher may categorize a parent he is counseling as "overprotective" because several reported incidents have aroused memories of his own smothering childhood experience.

In terms of the different roles, happily, the teacher has the child a few hours of the day. The parents' responsibility is a twenty-four-hour-a-day proposition. This is good for all concerned, particularly for the child. There is a greater likelihood for the teacher to gain some psychological and emotional distance from the child leading to new possibilities for growth. On the other hand, hopefully, the parent has a few children to cope with rather than a classroom full. Again, this spells a difference for the child and for the adults as well. We can expect and hope for the child to gain something from the intimate family relationship not available to him in school.

For our children's sake, let's be involved with one another. In the growing mental health field of family therapy, the concept of triangular interpersonal relationships has drawn some attention. We have all heard of the "eternal triangle." Freud saw such a triangle working within the family, and he labeled it the Oedipus complex. Present practitioners give the sexual aspects relatively little importance. The

emphasis now is applied to the total relationship. "Getting triangled" is that uncomfortable feeling of being caught in the middle of someone else's battle. This concept of being caught in a triangle may apply to specific instances of parent-teacher-child interpersonal relationships. To avoid this from being destructive, it is imperative that each person in the triangle feel secure enough to participate openly in the communication network. There may be differences, sides may be taken on issues, but it is necessary that honesty and genuineness prevail in this three-way relationship so that messages can be dealt with consciously.

Too much of our communication is covert. Some covering-up of issues springs from the overused and abused concept of consistency. This happens when consistency is seen as filling the need for a united front. With children the strategy seems to be "don't let them see our disagreement because it will weaken our position with them." A world without conflict is unreal. Children can't learn to solve problems unless they witness the process.

Ginott pokes fun at our tendency to whitewash tensions that exist in intimate relationships with his anecdote about why grandparents and grandchildren get on so well together. He explains that it is because they have a common enemy. It's kind of disquieting for most of us to think of such things. This confirms the need to become more aware so as to deal with negative feelings rationally.

We need to be involved with each other. It's difficult to imagine how the traditional treatment model for emotionally disturbed children ever worked. Too often the therapist never spoke to the child's parents. It is a maxim for the child psychotherapist that he can't be effective with a child whose parents he doesn't respect. The same applies to teacher and

parents.

For our children's sake, let's set good examples. As parents and teachers learning effective communication skills, we discover that what we learn has general applicability, and that we can serve as positive models for our children. The skills, for example, are as effective in communicating with a spouse, an employer, or a child. Thomas Gordon⁴ has demonstrated that children quickly develop the newly acquired skills of their parents enrolled in "Parent Effectiveness Training" courses.

There is a decided difference in learning things in the abstract and learning to perform. We know through long years of experience that a good deal of knowledge acquired in school or college doesn't readily carry over to the work situation. More attention, particularly in professional schools, is being given to learning by doing, field work, laboratory experience, perceptual learning, skill training, and so on.

In the area of interpersonal communication, there seem to be very few prerequisites regarding formal education. I am reminded of a story of Carl Rogers⁵ about an encounter group experience with top executives from government and industry. These were men with many honors, high levels of sophistication, and easy facility with language. However, there was one exception in a plant manager, Joe, who had not finished high school. Joe had not shed all the coarseness of his many years' experience in the plant. After a brief but shaky beginning, Joe became the catalyst for that group. Carl Rogers readily took a back seat as facilitator because of Joe's spontaneity, genuine warmth, and depth of understanding. Perhaps in this workshop, each of us can view it as an opportunity to practice what is preached.

For our children's sake, let's become child advocates. We need to

be pulling together to help children. Teachers, psychologists, judges, and such scarcely needed to have formal documentation on the crisis regarding the neglect of services for children, but they do have it in the Joint Commission report⁶ and the 1970 White House Conference on Children. From before the time of conception to young adulthood there is widespread and profound neglect.

We are not simply teachers and parents focusing upon one or several specific children. We also have a direct investment in the lives of all children present and future. What becomes of family and educational institutions is our vital concern. Our attention, therefore, goes beyond parent-teacher communication to embrace the interrelationship of family, school, and society. The neglect of children is so widespread that both reports just cited urged the creation of a child advocate system. The National Institute of Mental Health was prompted to give high priority to grant applications providing for child advocates.

The last major topic relates to communication skills. There is no such thing as not communicating in an interpersonal situation. We all know that silence has meaning; hence the familiar saying, "Silence sometimes speaks louder than words." Whether we have words or not, we also know that much communication takes place by means of facial expressions, gestures, body posture, and so on. We get meaning from the clenched fist, sitting on the edge of a chair, smoking a pipe, and so on. Popular attention has been given this topic through the recent best seller, Body Language, by Julius Fast⁷. We may not be very conscious of these nonverbal cues; however, we should realize that we do respond to them. They are very much a part of the total perceptual field, and they have an effect. The influence might be like the effect of room

temperature. The heat or cold can cause difficulties for quite some time without commanding our attention. Such things occur because we live too much in our heads rather than in our bodies. In other words, our subjective experience is often fragmented.

This is basically the reason for the common problem of losing touch with or minimizing the importance of feelings. In developing effectiveness in interpersonal communication, it is essential to understand the part that feelings play. Everything communicated has a message of content (the cognitive element) and a message of feeling. A speaker's statement is always partly reflexive and partly expressive. A feeling or attitude is communicated about himself in his speaking and about the speaker's perception of the listener. For example, may I quote a familiar phrase: "Now I want to make this perfectly clear...." Thus it is implied that the speaker is not very sure he can say things clearly and he is not sure that his listeners are able to grasp what is said.

In getting the meaning of a communication, we should be able to appreciate where we are with the other on the feeling level. Only then can the remark, "I understand," be valid.

Getting in touch with feelings may be helped along if we realize that wanting to communicate boils down to having an unmet need of some kind. A teacher may speak to a parent about his child striking other children in the classroom. Whatever the teacher actually says to the parent, regardless of the evident intent of the message, you can be sure the teacher is in need of help for a felt problem. The unspoken message might be something like, "This situation has me buffaloed, and I'm in search of a solution." In such situations there may be tones of attack, defense, and counter-attack. It is helpful at such times to cut through

the verbiage and speak directly to the need.

Every statement reduces to a demand. Fritz Perls⁸ writes that the only true communication is an imperative statement. In work with people who are so-called emotionally disturbed, it is apparent that they usually have great difficulty in making demands or even stating their needs. They have problems in being assertive. A classic example is wife and hubby trying to decide which picture show to see. Each insists on going to the one the other wants to see. So the conversation shifts from "Which one do you want to see?" to "Do you want to see such and such?" They end up seeing a show neither really wanted because they think it's the other's choice. They may both feel resentful while never discovering what happened. It could be that our loving relationships are more often fouled up because of not knowing how to demand than because of not being able to give.

There are a number of valuable working principles about effective communication that are not very difficult to grasp. We should remember that communication is not simply knowing how to say things. Talking is but one of three broad aspects of interpersonal communication. Listening and arguing also must be included. Different specific skills apply to each one of the three aspects.

There are times when we must listen--really listen. All other things must be set aside for intentness to the other's communication. It's this that allows what Truax and Carkhuff⁹ call accurate empathy (it's what Gordon calls active listening and Ginott calls congruent listening). There are several cues to be alert to for knowing when to listen. One is when a lot of feeling is shown. A second is when the other clearly has a problem. A third is when the communication is

puzzling. The moment when someone is experiencing a strong emotion is not the time to explain something, to instruct, or to moralize. It's a time for actively listening to the other through his disruptive feelings.

There are many ways not to put things and many things better left unsaid. They fall into the general classifications of put-downs, talk-downs, and evasions. They mostly come out as conditioned reflexes, and for most of us it takes long and diligent practice to get rid of them.

I'll try to give you a sampling of a wide range of typical road-blocks in adult-to-adult communications. These are better known as examples of the "dirty dozen." They are the kinds of things we say when it's better to listen.

1. (Command). "Stop griping!"
2. (Threat). "If you are late with your reports one more time, it's going into your personnel folder."
3. (Preaching). "You should appreciate all that the administration has been trying to do for you."
4. (Advising). "Why don't you tell the supervisor it's you who deserves the credit."
5. (Lecturing). "Let's look at the facts."
6. (Judging). "For someone who's been teaching for a year and a half, you should know that by now."
7. (Praising). "You are the most wonderful parent."
8. (Name-calling). "Mr. Know-it-all."
9. (Interpreting). "You feel that way because you can't remember what it was like to be a child."
10. (Consoling). "Just give it time and you'll feel better."

11. (Probing). "When did you first notice that you were upset?"
12. (Diverting). "Come on--let's talk about something more pleasant."

The effects of such comments can't be minimized. They do block communication. They also may undermine self-esteem and self-confidence. They may hurt. They can arouse resentment. They can cost you a friend or a productive worker.

There are times to speak up assertively as I indicated earlier. There are ways of asserting or confronting without attacking or without insulting. When we have a problem with someone, rather than launching an attack against the other's character or castigating him for his bad intentions, it would be well to specify how you're experiencing the problem. It would be saying, "I'm feeling edgy about being late" rather than "You're being your old late-self again." Or "I'm annoyed when the door is left open because it gets very cold in here" rather than "You're trying to heat the outdoors."

When in conflict with another, we are faced with the task of resolving differences without diminishing ourselves or the other. For want of a very good word, I'll call this process "arguing" as defined in a neutral sense. One big hang-up as mentioned before was the idea that conflict is bad. Conflict is inevitable when two people relate. Reaching a solution is what matters. A second hang-up is the heavy reliance on power. Winning an argument by talking the loudest or being more threatening is not resolving a problem; it is simply imposing a solution that creates other problems. Getting a point across by acting as an authority and talking-down to others is defeating. There is need for people "talking-up"--"talking-out"--with mutual respect rather than

for having them talked down and put down.

Perhaps a chief reason for arguments getting out of hand is what we refer to as being "ego-involved." It's losing sight of the issues and dealing in personalities. This can come about by not perceiving the ego or self as having boundaries. Biting criticism directed toward our favorite presidential candidate can stir us but not as though it's a direct attack upon our person. Evidence for this sort of thing exists in the comment, "He takes things too personally."

Effective communication calls for an appreciation of physical and psychological boundaries. These boundaries are always needing redefinition in any continuing relationship. For example, a worker may be given a new job assignment entailing different responsibilities, ones that he accepts as "his." As a result, his pattern of communicating with fellow workers has changed. Sometimes even simple changes in work assignments can require a period of adjustment. One might find himself reacting strongly if another worker over-steps and intrudes on what's not his assigned task.

Effective communication skills can't be taken for granted. We all have had too much exposure to poor examples to rest comfortably on ordinary experience. Some things require unlearning and there are many other things to be learned anew. It takes the kind of effort you will make at this workshop. It's worth it. Without a doubt parents and teachers are the most potent force in children's lives. Psychologists have been quoted as saying that it's the earliest years that count the most in establishing people's life styles. There is no disputing this. But every year in a child's life is important. The growing-up process is on a continuum. One of several critical periods in a child's life

is school entry. This is a time when parent and teacher together become involved. Whether or not these significant adults communicate effectively with each other has great bearing on the child's wellbeing. Cooperative programs between parents, teachers, and school administrators are much needed to help with what the Joint Commission is pointing up as a national crisis.

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DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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Communication and its development have been viewed from many different disciplines and from many points of emphasis. From the abundance of literature on the topic, let us look at some principles of human communication as a context in which to explore the development of communication skills.

We have found useful the view advanced by Barnlund (1970), who speaks of communication as a process of creating meanings. The word "process" indicates that communication is not static. It is a changing, evolving process in which two or more people participate. Thus, communication is circular. It is a continual process of message, meaning, and response. Each response is another message, stirring meanings and further response, as shown below:



The phrase "creating meanings" indicates that meanings are not directly transferable from one person to another. Messages are sent, but the meanings given to those messages arise within the nervous system of the receiver. For example, at this time we are giving you messages; you are giving meanings to those messages. The meanings given to a

message by the receiver may or may not correspond closely to the meanings intended by the message sender. Further, meanings created within the nervous system of the receiver are effected by a great variety of factors in both sender and receiver, as well as by situational context, previous experience, and future expectations. Thus communication is an interactive process: its basic design consists of the sending of messages, the receiving of messages, the processing by the receiver into his own meanings, and the formulating of the receiver's responses.

We see that communication is a complex and forward-moving process. Each communicative act is nonrepeatable and irreversible with its own created meanings. That is to say, each act of communication creates its meanings from which the receiver responds. Fortunately, we may amend messages, thus creating additional meanings. All of us have experienced this when we have said a hasty word that we wish that we could take back. However, we know we cannot do so; all we can do is modify the meaning that has been created.

It can be seen, also, that communication involves the total personality of sender and receiver. Each participant brings all of himself, his intelligence, self-concept, trust, expectancies, goals, etc., into each communicative act. These are some of the great variety of factors that effect message and meaning.

Further, it is established that communication involves nonverbal as well as verbal dimensions. We are all aware of the nonverbal cues others give us--the smile, head nod, set lips. Indeed, it seems quite necessary to include "body language" as a factor in the communicative equation; often this overrides the verbal dimension as a message sender. When the verbal message is not consistent with the nonverbal message, people will

give more credence to the nonverbal message. For example, a person's words may say a complimentary, "I like you," while his nonverbal messages are those of moving away, giving you little of his time. In this case you inevitably believe his nonverbal message.

With all of the previously mentioned variables in operation, it is not amazing that communication goes awry. Rather, it seems more amazing that people communicate as well as they do.

Skills Must Be Developed

Despite the complicated nature of the human interactions we call communication, it is possible to increase our use of constructive communication. We will focus on three areas which in this time can be discussed only briefly. Because these skills apply to all communicative interactions, they are of course applicable to productive interactions with parents, for we know that it is only through communication that we become involved with parents and they with us.

Skill areas are

1. Clear identification of the kinds of meanings we would like to create,
2. Use of language forms that will communicate most accurately, and
3. Listening and responding to another's meaning.

Obviously these can be separated only for discussion. In actual use they are overlapping and circular.

Often message senders pay little attention to clear identification of the kinds of meanings they intend to create in message receivers. Intended meanings vary widely. We may not even acknowledge our intended meanings. For example, our message may state, "I'd like you to find

this information useful," while our intended meaning is, "I'd like you to find me smart and powerful." You have perhaps had experience with parents whose verbal communication was, "I think you are doing a wonderful job, and I want to cooperate...", while their nonverbal communication announced, "I don't approve of what you're doing and I'm not going to change my ways an inch." When we clearly identify the meanings we intend to create and state these directly, we can diminish the possibility of such inconsistencies.

Use of language forms that will communicate accurately has filled many books. When one speaks of language forms, people often think of vocabulary and grammar. While these are important, we will discuss a different level that underlies many adult problems in using language to communicate effectively. We refer here to difficulty in differentiating reports, inferences, and judgments. The terms "report," "inference," and "judgment" differentiate the kind of statements our message will be, and each calls for a different language form if the message is to be accurate.

Reports are statements of factual, verifiable material. With respect to people, reports tell what a person says or does. With respect to objects or events, reports also describe what can be observed. There is generally the highest degree of agreement among people about this kind of statement.

Inferences are statements about the unknown which are based on knowns; i.e., inferences state our predictions or guesses based on what we know. For example, when we state, "Tom didn't speak to me when I met him in the hall this morning," we are reporting an observable event. When we state on the basis of that observation, "Tom is mad

at me," we have made an inference or a statement about the unknown because "mad" is an internal state and cannot be observed directly. We get less agreement on inferences than we do on reports. Another person may infer, for example, that Tom was busy or did not feel well. Inferences can have a high degree of probability or a low degree depending on the kind and amount of information on which they are based. For example, "I believe the sun will rise tomorrow," is a highly probable inference based on a great many knowns while Tom's internal state, "mad" or "busy," based on the fact that he did not speak, has less probability of being accurate. Many nonsense arguments could be avoided if we understood that the message was about the unknown and looked for the kind and amount of information known.

Judgments or evaluative statements express "I like it," "I don't like it," "I value it," or "I don't value it." Statements such as "Mary is mean, sweet, lazy, pretty, etc." tell how I feel or think about Mary. They do not tell about her. Inferences and judgments are closely related, and both are often contained in one message.

If we practiced differentiating between reports, inferences, and judgments, we would know that reports tell about what is outside of us and inferences and judgments tell about what is inside of us. Appropriate language forms for inferences and judgments are those preceded by such phrases as "I think, I believe, I feel, information suggests, data indicates." Thus messages become more accurate.

A third consideration in developing communication is listening and responding to the messages of others. It has been said that in every communicative act is a request to be validated as a person of some worth. Probably nothing conveys respect for the other person more than skilled

listening and responding. Such listening is an active process, never the passive process we often think of it as being. In order to make responses which convey that we have listened with respect, we must actively try to catch the world of meanings of the other person. For example, if we ask a mother to get her child to school more promptly, it is important to catch the meaning this request has to her. Our request is legitimate. The meaning this request has to her is also legitimate. Her cooperation may depend on the quality of our listening and responding.

All of us have experienced the kind of listening and responding which conveys that the other person was only waiting for us to stop so he could express his own message. His message may bypass altogether the meaning we were trying to communicate. For example, you may be talking about how difficult your job is, and at the first break the other person starts telling you about his vacation. We have all experienced feeling our listener had made his inferences and judgments before he had really heard us. At times we have also experienced feeling that a listener wholeheartedly listened to us and his responses indicated real participation in our world of meaning. We know this latter type of listening response promotes productive communication. In order to accomplish such listening one delays judgment and inference while closely attending to the report of what the other person has to say. It is difficult to convey such participant-listening in words because it is as much an attitude as a skill. It is an attitude of focusing on this person, this situation, this meaning as fully as possible without trying to force his meaning into our preconceived channels. Of course, this kind of activity does not preclude a listener introducing his own responses, ideas,

meanings; it is rather a more constructive choosing of their time and appropriateness.

It might be useful to tape record some of your communications and listen to them to note your responses which follow the other's meanings and those that bypass the other's message. Such tapes could also be used to check your use of reports, inferences, and judgments as well as to consider to what extent you think your messages created the meanings you intended to create in the other person.

Constructive Communication Results

Several results accrue from identifying the meanings that we hope to create, trying to use linguistic forms as effectively as possible, and listening and participating in the meanings the other person is experiencing. One result may be simply to create a constructive communicative relationship with the person as a basis for continued interaction. That is, we may establish in the other person a sense that we have concern for him as a human being, that he can have some trust in this relationship, and that further communication is possible. Second, we give information that is beneficial. Third, through our listening and trying to understand we may help another person clarify his attitudes and thereby better understand his behaviors. Finally, through the process of communication persons may be helped to changed their behaviors.

It is evident that we must communicate effectively with parents if we are to involve parents productively. Even as all of the skills discussed above are necessary for effective communication with parents, so also are results the same with parents as with other populations.

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A SUCCESSFUL PARENT-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP--

WILL THE SYSTEM ALLOW IT?

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I am not sure when professional domination of the schools occurred. I became aware of it in the early 1960's when I went to a meeting and heard an official of the National Education Association tell a community group that education had become much too complicated for lay people to understand. We should, she said, stick to the PTA and leave education to the professional educators. The total sum of knowledge had doubled in the ten years prior, she said, and only professionals could handle it. They knew what was good for our children, and we simply should not ask too many questions but do all we could to support them. I was outraged. As a parent, I had spent a good deal of my time organizing community action groups to improve education. When I dug in, I found plenty wrong with the schools, professional educators not withstanding.

Take the case of my own child.

Her grades suddenly plummeted in the fourth grade, her handwriting was reduced to a scribble, and she spent most of her time staring out the window. I pointed out to the teacher that something frightening was happening, but the teacher looked at the test scores and shook her head. I must accept the fact that Ellen was slow, she said. I tried to point out that Ellen had hay fever when she took those tests, but she firmly assured me that Ellen was incapable of doing well at school.

Hers became a self-fulfilling prophecy. For the next two years, teachers received the bad records one from the other, and Ellen was every bit the lousy student they expected her to be.

Then, by a mysterious jumbling of records that only a school district could explain, she was put in a seventh grade honors English class. She was miserable and wanted out. I again intervened, but the teacher refused to release her, even though she agreed it was certainly an embarrassing mistake. Somehow my intervention, however, turned Ellen into a human being instead of the dumb kid at the bottom of the English class for that teacher. She went to work on Ellen, who by the end of the year regained her confidence sufficiently to make an "A" in that course and an "A" in all other subjects as well. Don't tell me professional educators know what's best for my child. A few more standardized tests given during hay fever season, and Ellen could have wound up permanently in special education. The impact of the second teacher came about only because I intervened to make her aware that my child both (a) existed and (b) was being destroyed by a system that labelled her as inadequate.

Whenever I look at any child whom a teacher tells me is a low-achiever or educationally deprived, I think of Ellen and I wonder who is responsible for what is called deprivation--the child or the system which refuses to accept and deal with the child where he is. Ellen was not deprived; she was neglected by the system. So are many other children.

Parents are giving up important rights and indeed selling out their children when they do not become involved. The public education system is predicated on the democratic tenet that parents and the community run the schools, not the other way around. Despite the admonitions of the NEA lady, education is much too important to be left to the educators.

According to one research study, the amount of parent involvement in the schools by individual parents may explain up to four times as much of the variance in a child's intelligence and achievement test scores at age 11 as the quality of the schools.

So when we talk about parent involvement--those of us who are serious about educating our children--we aren't playing games. We are not talking about the kind of fraudulent parent involvement where parents rubber stamp what the school officials do or where a committee is listed on paper but seldom meets. We know that parent involvement is the important missing link in most educational programs that don't work. We know that educators are kidding themselves when they say they can go it alone.

My long experience as a community volunteer in PTA, in educational coalitions, led me to the realization that parents were often more realistic and open-minded and ahead of the professional educators in ideas which benefited their children. Schools will survive as viable institutions only if parents are insistent and emphatic in their determination to participate. Otherwise, the bureaucratic doors will close on a bureaucratic institution which serves itself rather than children. Many people think that has already happened. I do not believe the condition is irreversible, but I do believe it is much worse than it was even a few years ago when I worked as a parent rather than a professional. Parents have to fight harder now to be heard even though we seem to be continually going through the motions of organizing policy advisory committees and parent councils...and then ignoring them. We pay lip service to parent involvement, but we don't internalize what we say. We don't mean it.

If the truth were really known, we are afraid of parent involvement--real parent involvement--because parent involvement means taking risks.

If you give parents the right to make decisions, that means the right to make bad decisions as well as good ones. Now you as an educator have that right, but you're not about to give it to parents. You may have made bad decisions which actually hurt children (although I am equally certain you are not about to admit it), but you do not want to give that right to parents. There is the even bigger risk that their decisions may not be bad ones at all but may, just may, be better than yours.

My baptism by fire in parent involvement as a professional educator came in 1968 when I had been with the Arkansas Department of Education less than one year. I was asked by the national Follow Through office to oversee a parent-implemented program in Pulaski County. The term "parent-implemented" aroused cold fear in the minds of my immediate superiors, and it was not until I watched their reaction that I realized how much built-in hostility existed in educational circles against parents, and especially poor parents as these were. They were clearly the enemy... yet we were administering money to serve their children. I had trouble with that. It seemed to me basically dishonest to be receiving salaries from funds intended for poor children and yet be unwilling to listen or respond to their parents.

I went to College Station, a predominantly black, low-income community at the southeast edge of Little Rock, and I talked about the Follow Through parent-implemented program to a group of Head Start parents. I felt superior to my less enlightened colleagues; I was the good white liberal there to help. Then the parents took what I said seriously and threw me out. They held a number of meetings to which I was not invited, and it was tremendously threatening to me. Could I take the risk of accepting the parents as human beings, capable of

making their decisions, both good and bad, or would I only be able to accept them if I exerted subtle control? They gave me no choice. It was the beginning of a real relationship on both sides. The parents ran their own show and communicated with me when something needed to be done. I knew they were serious and struggling for a share of the school district power so their children could get a fairer shake at school. I took them seriously when they came to me and so did the school district. I do not believe parents are the enemies. I believe they should be partners, but I do not think we will let them be--and that includes me--because it is easier and not as messy to make unilateral decisions--unless parents keep pushing us hard.

The parent-implemented Follow Through program at Pulaski County has developed strength and power over the past four years. I do not think the parents feel especially powerful; power is what other people think you have. I get enough anxious telephone calls from the school district to know that the position of the parents is not taken lightly on any matter now. Four years ago, it was very different.

I have sat through many parent and policy advisory committee meetings, and I have never heard a damaging or destructive remark made about a child there. I wish I could say the same for all the principal's offices and teachers' lounges I have been in. Whenever I judge a classroom, I try to determine if I would want my own children there, and I regret to report that I find many where I would not want my children. I have never seen a parent group with which I would not trust my own children. They always seem to want the same things for their children that I want for mine.

I do not want to represent parent involvement as easy or as an administrative rose garden. When the Pulaski County Follow Through

program underwent a General Accounting Office audit last spring, we found that the parent involvement component had created some king-sized hurdles. For one thing, with parents in on the decision-making, the ordinary lines of authority on organizational charts were impossible to draw. For another, the record-keeping lacked the technical perfection which the GAO demands, since much of it was done by parents or their representatives, none of whom had the same kind of middle class obsession with paper work which typify good bureaucrats. The services were done, and they knew which children received them. The children seemed somehow more important to them than committing everything to paper and leaving it in files for the GAO.

Last fall Mrs. Smith and I were doing a parent involvement workshop in Texarkana where we had experienced some rough going getting parents involved meaningfully in Follow Through. We ran into Sonny Walker, who has had much experience working with parents, and we drafted him into speaking. He said, among other things, that when you get involved as a parent, you go with Johnny to school--he's not alone. You are there to see that he gets fair treatment; and when you are there, the school has a different attitude toward Johnny.

During the small group sessions afterward we talked about what parents wanted from Follow Through for their children, and I was struck with how much they talked about their children's feelings. We don't give much time to that in education because we are so busy with basic skills. These parents cared about how their children felt about themselves and each other. They said their children were more positive about school and that Head Start had helped to make them so.

We have applied for and received a special grant to set up a parent

involvement research and training center at the Arkansas Department of Education. We hope to develop some means of measuring various levels of parent involvement so we can tell how much of an impact it has upon a child's education. We also hope to develop some better means of sensitizing school staffs to parents and of sensitizing parents to their own responsibility in halting the destruction of their children. We plan some innovative types of workshops which will allow real exchange between parents and school people. We do not have answers but we will, through this special program, have a chance to look for some. We hope to develop a resource file which will furnish a wealth of information, and we will be happy to share this with anyone who is interested in this area.

Breaking down resistances to parent involvement and building real trust--how do you do it? I wish I knew. You don't lure parents out with a gimmick such as door prizes, tell them what you want them to know, and expect any real involvement. If you are not getting real involvement, you had better look for some deeper reasons. How many homes have you sat in and listened to problems that somehow never come out at school in more formal conferences? How much real listening have you done to parents anywhere? Do you truly believe that parents have something of value to contribute?

These are questions that each of us must answer for himself. How they are answered will determine whether the system really intends to open its doors to parents.

COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP--A PARTNERSHIP

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Discussions during this conference have been devoted to parent involvement in our schools. Consideration has been given to communications between teachers, children, and parents. Perhaps in these discussions it has been discovered that the key to any school-community relationship is our individual ability and desire to communicate our thoughts, needs, and desires to those involved in the relationship. To put it another way--if we want to involve parents in our schools, we must communicate effectively with parents regardless of the type of parent involvement program we have. This is to say that indeed there must be a partnership between parents and schools if we are to educate children.

Perhaps it is inappropriate to compare the school-community relationship to a business partnership without first considering the significant difference in products. In the school-community relationship we are not concerned with the material end product that characterizes so many business partnerships. Our end products are educated children. Certainly no material value can be assigned to the importance and significance of human beings. Yet if we think together objectively about the elements of a business partnership, it seems to me that we may better understand the school's relationship with parents.

In a business partnership two parties with a common goal agree

that they will combine their talents and their capabilities and all other resources to make the business successful, with success usually determined by the amount of money made. Several steps are to be followed if the partners are to achieve their goal.

First, the partners must clearly define their goals. Second, they must decide how they will accomplish these goals. Third, they must consider the contributions each can make to the partnership and how these can be used to complement each other to insure a profit. Fourth, the partners must make decisions and choices about materials, tools, and equipment necessary to produce the best possible item for the least cost to insure a maximum profit. The fifth and final step is to determine the distribution of the profits.

Before going further in the comparison of the community-school relationship with a business partnership, let me define some terms for the purposes of this presentation.

A partnership, in my terms, means two parties have entered into an agreement to reach a common goal. Each has agreed to contribute his talents, capabilities, and/or knowledge in order that a common goal can be reached. The results of this association and agreement are equally shared. In such an association it would seem that there must be mutual trust and respect between the parties, a continual blending of resources, and cooperative searches for solutions to problems. All involved take credit for successes and share equally in responsibility for failures. In short, they reap the benefits and share the consequences of the partnership endeavors.

A community, according to Webster, is a body of people having common interest or living in one locale. For the purposes of our discussion

the community refers to those parents who have children in our schools. The term "community" has the connotation of abstraction and allows us to disassociate ourselves from people as individuals, thus enabling us to avoid a feeling of responsibility as one of its components. However, I would like you to join me in thinking of community as being those parents with whom we are daily involved and to whom we face our responsibilities in an individualized and personal way. The growing lack of a feeling of responsibility in community affairs is evidenced by the numbers of citizens who do not exercise their rights to vote. Some counties have indicated that fewer than 50% of eligible Americans vote in national elections and even fewer in local elections. It is as though we believe that national issues have more effect on day-to-day lives than local ones. Or perhaps we are more willing to become involved at a distance and less willing to deal with local issues. Whatever the reasons, there can be no doubt there is evidence of uninvolved or disassociation. We must not allow the thread of disassociation to run through the cloth of the partnership which we, the school, have with our community. The parents we serve comprise our community. They are the people to whom we are responsible and accountable.

Two of the many definitions Webster includes in his dictionary for schools are 1) a place where instruction is given and 2) a body of students divided into classes. It is interesting that Webster's definitions are impersonal--a place and a division of people--rather than an involvement of people in transactions that cause learning to occur. For this reason I find Webster's definitions unacceptable. They suggest abstraction and omit the personal aspect of school. They suggest that

instructions can be given and that students can be divided into classes and that the result can be called "school"--whether or not learning takes place. In my view, any definition that omits the personal involvement which occurs in the place called school has failed to define the real happenings in schooling. The term "school" to me represents administrators and teachers responsible for those human transactions which must occur in order for learning to take place. I concur with Martin Deutsch's statement that the responsibility for children's learning in school is the teacher's. He believes that if a child does not learn, it was not the fault of the child but rather the fault of the teacher for not providing the proper method, material, and/or experience for that child. In other words, if the child has not learned, the teacher has not taught.

In our partnership the parties are the parents who represent the community and the teachers who represent the school.

In a way it seems that educational institutions are having the same experiences as two parties have in establishing a partnership. Schools (administrators and teachers) are being asked to identify their goals and purposes so that community (parents) goals can be aligned with them. The common goal of our partnership is the education of children. But what has not been clarified is a description of the final product. A business must know what its end product will be or it will not know which materials and equipment to purchase or which processes to initiate.

We teachers are being asked today what exactly are our purposes, because we have failed in some cases to fulfill our goal to educate the young to the satisfaction of the community. This dissatisfaction is

at all socio-economic levels. We have failed to educate the so-called disadvantaged, and we have failed as well to develop the fullest potential of middle and upper class children. Substantial numbers of children enter nursery school and kindergarten eager to learn, and yet by the third grade they have lost their curiosity for learning. Children have received the message that schooling is a bore. It is to be tolerated. School is a place where children and parents are told what to do and what not to do, and they are tired of hearing it.

In our parent involvement programs, we must also define our objectives. As you have discovered in this conference, parent involvement can mean many things to many people.

Parent involvement programs may be divided into two main categories. The first are programs designed to educate parents. This approach assumes that teachers and administrators know what is best for all children and that parents do not. Often, unfortunately, this approach also assumes that parents have nothing to contribute to the education of their children. Therefore, schools must tell or teach them what to do. Another assumption teachers sometimes make is that parents do not know what to do with their children and do not care about their children. Glasser states that teachers are delegating their responsibilities for teaching children if they feel parents must prepare children for school before schooling begins. For the deprived family, these programs are designed to instruct parents (mothers) in what to do with their children. For the middle class family, these programs tell parents what they can do for the school.

Perhaps you are inferring from remarks that I have a negative attitude toward parent education programs. You are partially correct.

These types of programs are necessary and should be included in school planning. However, my objection is that often parents are not involved in decisions about what these programs should include. They are not presented with alternatives, but rather are told what to do.

The second category includes programs which totally involve parents in the decision-making process. These programs assume that parents can contribute to the educational experience of their children. Another premise of these programs is that parents, regardless of socio-economic level, know what is best for their child. Thus, they are involved in decision-making processes with regard to policies affecting the educational process of their children and themselves.

In his book Parent Involvement in Compensatory Education,⁸ Ira Gordon suggests five levels of involvement:

1. Parents are either an audience getting the message and listening to the word or are involved as bystanders and observers visiting the schools.
2. Parents are involved as active teachers of children in an effort to change family patterns to meet the school's or professionals' concept of what home ought to be.
3. Parents are involved as aides and volunteers in the classroom with the major thrust being to change the parent rather than to change the school.
4. Parents are involved as trained workers and assistant teachers.
5. Parents control the school board and the school system in the making of policies.

In my opinion, parent involvement programs should be at the fifth level. Of course, in a private school setting the circumstances are somewhat different. The owners operate the school and parents bring their children to the school for an education. Operators of private, church, and commercial pre-primary schools should clearly define their

philosophy of education, goals, objectives, and curriculum so that parents will know what they are purchasing when they pay the tuition. In this way parents may choose those educational programs which coincide with their goals for their children. Parents, not teachers, have the total responsibility for making decisions relative to the development of their children. The teachers' responsibility is providing accurate, objective information to parents about their children in order that the parents can make appropriate intelligent decisions about their children's future.

Now that we have defined the goal of our partnership and dealt in some depth with some of the terms, let's move on to deciding how we will accomplish this goal. In considering the accomplishment of the common goal of the education of young children, I reflect upon the history of American education. In the beginning, groups of parents made arrangements with the most literate of their group to educate their young. Their teaching was done in small multi-age level groups. The teacher would move from home to home to work with the children in return for room and board. The decision as to what would be taught was determined by the parents. The parental control was so strong it even determined how the teacher must live.

As communities grew and society became more complex, the partnership between parent and teacher took on some of the characteristics of a corporation. Parents believed that the most efficient way of securing monies for the education of their children was through taxation. They felt that decision-making processes should be delegated to professional educators, while parents should retain the policy-making function. Thus, parents became less involved in the actual education

of their children. It could well be that it was at this point that educators began to assume that parents needed to be educated, rather than directly involved in the educational process. We were reinforced in this belief by parents' willingness to delegate the responsibility for seeing that our cultural heritage was transmitted to the younger generation. These parents were buying stock in our educational corporation. They expected that we would take the raw potential of their children and, through learning processes, produce a thinking, productive, and refined product. As with most corporations, they expected that their stock would bring greater dividends than their original investments. We performed to the best of our abilities and did, for a while, increase the value of their stock. But as society became more complex and technologically advanced, some parents realised that we were no longer fulfilling our function and that a substantial number of children were entering school at one level of ability and leaving at a lesser level. They realized that the needs of society had changed, but that teachers and administrators were still educating as they had in the past.

Parents are now asking us to be accountable for our products. They are asking once again to have a part in educational decisions which involve the welfare of their children. They are truly asking us now to form a partnership with them, a partnership which will capitalize on the combined talents of the professional educator and the parents. The mechanics for establishing this business venture have not yet been determined, but it must include joint and total involvement of parents, teachers, and administrators.

Now let us consider the contributions that each partner can make

to the partnership and how these can be used to complement each other and to insure a profit.

Gordon points out, "Parent involvement must somehow mean involvement of parents in partnership arrangements stressing the needs, strengths, concerns, and special knowledge the parents have and utilizing the expertise of the professional."

What contributions can each partner in our educational corporation make? Some of the parental contributions are obvious to all, so I shall only briefly mention them, but there are others that I feel need special attention. The most obvious are

1. Providing information about their children--likes, dislikes, assets, weaknesses, interests, and needs as well as medical and health information.
2. Assisting in the classrooms as teachers, teacher aides, and special resource people.
3. Supplementing and complementing the capacities and talents of the professional.
4. Explaining their goals and expectations for their children.

Why are they enrolling their children in the school? What do they want their children to be like when they are adults? With this type of information, teachers can better plan their curriculum. Information about adult products may seem far-fetched. Recently, however, Memphis State sponsored a workshop on Career Education in the Elementary School which included a discussion of career education in kindergarten.

Three less obvious contributions are money, political agents, and decision makers. First, parents provide the monies through taxes or

tuitions for the operation of our schools. In one interest group, someone mentioned that most of their parents were ADC mothers; therefore, they were unable to contribute money to the program. May I assure you that no person in this country escapes paying taxes, if it is nothing more than state and local taxes on purchases. These tax funds are used for schools, welfare, and public health. Knowing that they are giving to, as well as receiving from, the day care program may stimulate reluctant parents to participate and to become involved. No matter what socio-economic level a person is, he has a need to have dignity and to feel the direction of his becoming.

Among the group attending this conference are many people who work for governmental programs. Because of this, we could assume that parent involvement is only for the poor. This is far from the truth. Affluent parents should be involved in our schools also. In some instances the children of the middle and upper classes are more deprived than the poorer children. Their parents are so involved in community volunteer work or in traveling or civic affairs that they have no time to "educate" their children; they may tend to dissociate themselves from one of the most crucial influences on their children's lives.

One of the most significant roles parents can have is that of a political agent. As parents become acquainted with the needs and problems of early education and of families, they can become active cogs in the political machinery which enacts legislation favorable to the needs of young children and their families. They can interpret the goals and purposes of our curriculum content. Most Southern states do not have public preprimary education because communities (parents) are not convinced that it is a necessity.

Lastly, parents can assist in making decisions relevant to the education of their children. You may ask, "But what if parents want a curriculum which is educationally bad for children?" It is our responsibility as professionals to provide accurate information to parents which will clarify our positions. In addition, as professionals we have a responsibility to assist parents in clarifying their positions. We need to push their thinking. We should not accept "I wants" from parents without asking their reasons. Neither should they accept our "wants" without inquiring about our reasons. Intelligent decisions are made upon objective data, not upon "I think" or "I want" information.

This approach suggests that teachers and schools contribute their professional expertise to this partnership. This expertise includes diagnosing the strengths and weaknesses of children and prescribing a curriculum for the development of all children's potential, matching curriculum and methods of teaching to the individual strengths and weaknesses of children.

Teachers should also make objective interpretations of a child's behavior so parents can make intelligent decisions relevant to the future of their child. In this way parents will feel that they can become or are the directors of their lives and of the lives of their children.

It seems to me that we must assist parents in realizing that the major responsibility for their child's growth and development is theirs. All that teachers or schools can do is supplement what parents do for and with their children. Perhaps you feel that I am placing too little significance on the role and function of the schools and on teachers.

Maybe I am. However, I believe that the school is only one agency in the community impinging on the life of a family. Consequently, parents gather information from different sources and make decisions concerning their children. Frankly, I do not want to be responsible for the total development of all the children I have taught or will teach. Being accountable for my own two daughters' development is enough.

In this partnership schools can provide the tools, equipment, and materials to enhance the capabilities of children. Further, teachers can select the teaching method which matches the learning process of individual children.

It is at this point that the contributions of each partner are blended for the benefit of the children. With the information that parents have provided and with the objective data teachers have accumulated, a curriculum is designed for children, the methods of teaching are selected, the process of learning begins, and the partnership is in business. The refining and improving of the raw potential of children is underway.

Each partner becomes accountable for his contribution to the final product. Each shares in the shaping and the refining of the product. Each begins to receive its dividends.

The dividends for parents are children who are able to function in our society, who are able to make their own decisions, who are self-sufficient, and who are able to learn. The dividends for teachers are children who have a positive self-concept, who feel secure with themselves, who trust others, who learn, and who support the educational institution. For both partners, the final product is an individual who has identity and who knows that he is valued. Equally

important, he has the ability to care for someone else.

The education of children is a partnership's investment in the future. It means that a better world is expected, that life will continue for generations, and that it is important for the past and present to be related to the future.

The profits of the business are children who ultimately become literate, productive, thinking adults willing to re-invest in the educational futures of their children and in the welfare of all mankind. With such profits, our partnership is declared solvent.

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PARENTS AS TEACHERS OF PARENTS

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I do not come to you as an expert or an authority but as an equal, to share experiences from my last four years of work in a Follow Through model of parent education. These experiences will be colored by my classroom years and my own child rearing practices. When I was first approached about speaking today, I understood my topic to be parent educational involvement with preschool children, or what parents could do at home to provide learning experiences without government funds and structures. When I read a copy of the program, I found I was talking about "Parents as Teachers of Parents." Therefore, I will try to discuss both, since they are integral parts of the project in which I work.

Let's begin with parent involvement with preschool children. A few years ago parents were emphatically told not to try to teach their child to read or write or count before he came to school because they did not know the correct methods and would only confuse the child. I remember how alarmed I was when the kindergarten teacher taught one of my daughters to write her name all in capitals. I felt duty bound to tell my child to just sit quietly and learn to write the way the teacher taught her. You were really in hot water if you had tried to teach your child to read. The parents' role was to get the child to school on time, attend PTA, and vote on bond issues. Parents were not

encouraged to give opinions or make decisions unless they were on the school board. In the last few years, however, it has become clear that many children are not learning, particularly those from poor and minority groups. Responsibility and blame is being assigned to the home and those years before the child enters school. Some home factors repeatedly given as causes for failure are emotional instability, lack of consistent treatment, lack of materials, and lack of teaching skill on the part of the parents.

I believe any first grade teacher receiving children straight from deprived homes could accept these as facts, but schools must also share the blame since we continue to serve up the same curriculum to all children, even when we know some students cannot digest or even regurgitate it.

In addition to the reasons for failure already cited, there is considerable research indicating that a child's achievement in school, as well as his personality, can be directly traced to his home. If we are to help the non-achiever, we must study those homes and students which are successful.

Robert D. Hess of Stanford University, in a research paper entitled "Parental Behavior and Children's School Achievement Implications for Head Start," listed the attitudes, values, and exchanges of behavior between family members and young children which promote mental or cognitive growth, scholastic achievement, and readiness to learn in an educational setting. His list looks something like this:

A. Intellectual relationship

1. Parents of children with good academic performance were found to

- a. Value intellectual achievement
- b. Set high standards for their children
- c. Reward high achievement as well as punish poor behavior
- d. Provide situations and opportunities for the child to participate in conversational activities with adults at home which enlarge his vocabulary
- e. Show interest in the child's school achievement and provide assistance in school and non-school tasks
- f. Play an important role with their own teaching strategies of directing, helping, attentively observing, and playing with the child (emphasis is on the mother's strategies)
- g. Provide intellectual stimulation with books and materials. Emphasis is placed on reading to a child by an adult who is important to him.

B. Affective relationship

Children who are high achievers tend to have parents who treat them warmly, provide them with emotional support, and have feelings of high regard for the child as well as themselves.

C. Interaction patterns

1. The relation between achievement in children and the degree of independence indicates that high achievers are less dependent on adults than low achievers. Their mothers allow them more self-sufficiency, direction, and independence.
2. High achievers tend to come from homes where specific limits are set for the child, limits the child is aware of and expected to comply with.
3. Studies of discipline methods indicate the mothers who accompany rules with explanations and justification of discipline have children who are high achievers.

If indeed these factors contribute to a child's performance, then it is an obligation of the educational system to make parents aware and to help them develop ability to increase their child's self esteem and performance. How do we go about this? Well, one approach comes under the other topic I'm supposed to be discussing: parents as teachers of parents.

The Follow Through program in Jonesboro, using the Ira Gordon or

University of Florida Parent Educator Model, has the following objectives:

A. For parent

1. Increase parent's competence to teach own child through increased use of language, provision of information, use of questions, response to child's questions, encouragement of new activities, provision of warm, accepting environment.
2. Increase the amount of time spent with the child on educational-recreational activities.
3. Increase the use of library and community resources.
4. Increase attendance at school and class functions.
5. Increase the amount of family-centered activities (meals, trips).
6. Raise the level of expectation for academic achievement for the child.
7. Raise the feelings of interpersonal adequacy, personal appearance, and competence.
8. Increase parent's skill in relation to school.
9. Increase the feeling of internal control over one's life.

B. For children

1. Raise the level of self esteem.
2. Increase cognitive development and ability to ask questions, know evidence, manipulate materials, use abstract language, solve problems, and organize information.
3. Increase achievement motivation.
4. Increase acceptance and identity with social (ethnic) group.
5. Increase respect for acceptance of other children, other groups.
6. Increase initiative and self-direction.

To meet these objectives the sponsor emphasizes:

1. The development of nonprofessionals (mothers) as parent educators for home visits and as teacher aides in the classroom.
2. The development of appropriate instructional tasks which can be carried from the school into the home to establish a more effective home learning environment.
3. Development of parents as partners in the educational program for their child through parent meetings and the Policy Advisory Committee.

Now let's return to the first point of emphasis beginning with the development of the non-professional or parent educators. These aides are called parent educators because they are selected from the parent

community. They do not have to have a degree or a high school diploma even though these are certainly desirable. The criteria used for selection include intelligence and education enough to work with students, an ability to relate and interact with other parents, and personal cleanliness.

The model specifies using non-professional parents with the assumption that low-income families will relate and respond to others from the same social background more readily than to a professional or an authority figure. Research indicates that middle class teachers have difficulty understanding the poor child who comes to school from a home with rooms too crowded for quiet study, few or no facilities for cleanliness, and not enough food to provide energy to cope with school. Therefore, this research program uses parents to reach other parents.

Workshops and inservice training sessions are used to teach both the parent educator and teacher home visitation techniques, classroom teamwork, and referral methods for helping families obtain the needed services from local social agencies. The parent educator must visit each home once a week to demonstrate to the mother or mothering one a learning activity. She is also responsible for keeping records on the home visit and for administering attitudinal tests to parents and students. As a teacher auxiliary she works with individuals or small groups in any area except the initial instruction of a basic subject. In addition to making referrals to the teacher, social worker, or principal, the parent educator informs parents of parent activities and meetings and provides transportation when necessary.

The second point mentioned was the development of appropriate

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instructional materials. These materials, referred to as home tasks, are designed to enhance the academic development of the child, strengthen the parent-child relationship, and involve other family members such as younger or older brothers and sisters. As often as possible the task is turned into a game-type activity. Parent educators and teachers make up the tasks at workshops, inservice meetings, and school using the eight criteria developed by the model sponsor. (The task criteria sheet and sample tasks are attached to illustrate content and format.) During the home visit, parents are also asked to suggest ideas for tasks which they feel are important for the child to learn.

The last point of emphasis was the development of parents as partners in the educational program for their child through parent meetings and committees. The federal guidelines for any Head Start or Follow Through proposal require parental participation (1) in developing and approving the project application, (2) in recruiting and selecting employees and volunteers, and (3) in mobilizing community resources and organizing parent and family activities.

Some activities which we have used locally to encourage parent participation, other than through committee work, are spaghetti suppers and night classes in mechanics, woodworking, sewing, dieting, and exercising.

Assuming that early stimulation is desirable, that the home is the place to do it, and that the mother can be an effective stimulator of her child when adequately instructed, what can be done without government financed structures? Churches, schools, or social agencies can enrich the child's environment by helping parents to (1) develop games--homemade card games with pictures, numerals, or words; finger

plays; and physical and mental action drama; (2) take field trips to corner grocery, library, nearby farm or playground (to look for specific items, check costs for math activity, read labels on cans, read signs, and talk about experiences to develop language); (3) teach home skills that develop responsibility as well as make the child more proficient at school (an example is table setting where one plate, one glass, one fork, etc. are allocated for each individual, the one-to-one ratio is established, and the total counted); (4) read to children at an early age. (This cannot be overemphasized. The child will not value what Mother does not value. If she sits down with the child to discuss pictures, ask questions, and carry on a dialogue, she will be helping the child to develop reading readiness.)

Some materials readily available which can be obtained without cost include discarded magazines for reading and cutting, cardboard cylinders from toilet paper to make a two-way walkie-talkie for language development, bottle caps for counting, and free newsprint rolls from the local newspaper office for drawing.

The following are examples of material used in our project:

You know you have a good task when

1. The learner does a lot of talking. He tells about things, gives reasons, asks questions, tells you why, what, where, how.
2. The learner has fun doing it; there's a lot of interest and action.
3. The directions are clear enough that it can be taught.
4. You and the learner understand why you are doing it.
5. It encourages the teacher to use a lot of ways to teach and the learner to try different ways to do it. It is not cut and dried but takes thinking and swinging with what happens.
6. If possible, home materials are used.

7. The learner knows he has learned something, sees it right away, and feels good about it.
8. The learner is encouraged to think up new activities or things to do which grow out of the task.

The following are examples of activities which have been used successfully.

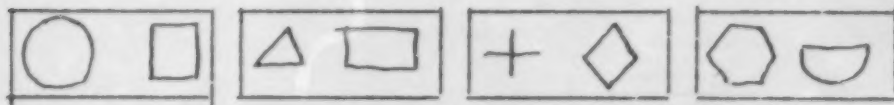
MATCHING GAME

AIM: For the child: To help your child recognize shapes by matching increasingly difficult combinations.

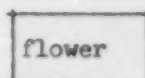
For the parent: To encourage child to perform visual tasks and gain practice in matching shapes.

VALUE: Beginning exercise with geometric shapes to help the child learn visual discriminations.

MATERIALS: 1. Eight geometric shapes cut from same color of paper and glued to cards. Two shapes are glued to each card as follows:



2. Cards with math facts such as $(2 + 3)$ $(4 + 1)$ $(5 + 6)$ and set of cards with answers.
3. Word cards and magazine or catalogue pictures to match. Example:



ACTION: Use these rules for all three games:

1. Tell your child you want to play a game with him.
2. Lay the card with a circle and a square on the table. Ask your child, "What can you tell me about this one?" pointing to the circle. Help him recognize that it is round. Then repeat this for the square. Praise your child when he gives you a good answer. For example, if he describes the circle as round, tell him, "That's right!" or "You sure know about this!" If your child gives a description that isn't right, ask him, "Why did you say that?" Help him correct or clarify any misunderstandings he has.

3. Lay the card that has a circle and a square on it in front of your child. Give him the circle and ask him, "Can you show me which ones are the same?" Praise him when he gets two that match and if they don't match, ask "Why did you put those two together?"
4. Repeat this task with math facts and word cards.

- ADAPTATIONS:
1. Repeat the task using two cards. For example, lay the card with the circle and square on it plus the card with the triangle and rectangle on it before your child and ask him to match a triangle with the shapes on the cards.
 2. Repeat the task using three and four cards.
 3. Repeat the task using objects around the room.
 4. Have your child find objects that match.

IN THE BAG

AIM: To provide a sharing experience.

MATERIALS: Paper bag and several small items.

- ACTION:
1. Put one item in the bag, for example, a small rubber ball.
 2. Peep in the bag and describe the item to the child, using several sentences.
 3. Ask the child to guess what the item is from your description. Show the item to the child after he guesses.
 4. If he guessed right, then he places an item in the bag and you guess from his description what it is. If his answer was wrong, then you place a second item in the bag, describe it, and he guesses again.
 5. Praise the child for his good sentences used in describing the items.

ADAPTATIONS: Have the child draw the object as you describe it. Show the item to the child and let him see how well his drawing resembles the item.

Have the child describe an item and you draw as he talks. See how well your drawing resembles the item.

TELEPHONE GAME

- AIM:** To encourage child to listen, talk, and repeat words; to develop and aid child in communication.
- MATERIALS:** Tissue rolls, yarn or string.
- ACTION:**
1. Connect tissue rolls together with string.
 2. Hold one tissue roll like a receiver and have child hold the other roll.
 3. Hold a make-believe conversation asking questions such as "What is your name?" "How are you?" "What is the weather like today?" "What is your brother's, mother's, father's name?"
- ADAPTATIONS:**
1. Talk with the child about objects and colors in the home and outdoors. Examples: "What color is your dress?" "What are you sitting on?"
 2. Carry on a pretend conversation to expand the imagination.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR PARENTS

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I believe that parent involvement should be looked at as much more than a "policy." Personally, I believe that to understand parent leadership, one must be a parent and experience attempting to make change or communicate with an agency in terms of your child and your philosophy of life and of learning. The following ideas are some with which the Tennessee State Training Office has become involved over the past year.

What is "parent involvement in Head Start"? Our definition is any response or participation on the part of a parent or guardian of a child eligible for the Head Start Program. Successful parent involvement is dependent upon a sincere desire for participation on the part of the agency institution or person serving the parent and child.

The following are some of the agencies, institutions, and persons parents are dependent upon for interaction related to their children: churches, hospitals, doctors, dentists, mental health centers, welfare departments, schools, Head Start programs, parent involvement coordinators, teachers, law enforcement officers, and the community at large.

Has your philosophy as a parent ever differed from one of the above in terms of how you believe you and your child should be served? If so, have you attempted to change this difference? Take, for example, the church, which should be most receptive to its membership. Many

parents feel responsible for their children's involvement in the program of the church; however, if the parent cannot manage attending church school at 9:30 A.M. Sunday but suggests 7:00 P.M. on Thursdays, is the suggestion positively dealt with by the organization? If the mother is convinced that she really wishes her baby to be with her from birth on, whom does she go to for such a request? How would physicians, nurses, and hospital administrators respond? In other words, has our past history truly shown a sincere desire to involve parents in the decision-making process concerning what happens to them and their children, or has someone else in the community made most of the decisions? How flexible can we become?

I propose that education of parents and community agencies is the only way to reach an actual state of "parent involvement." Let us analyze stages of parent involvement as I would see them in the organization of Head Start.

The first stage will be classified as primary, which involves

1. Parents answering the door and listening and talking with you.
2. Parents trusting you and enrolling the child in the program.
3. Parents regularly sending the child to the center. (Who likes to get out of bed and send a sleepy child off to "school"?)

The second stage involves

1. Parents visiting the center.
2. Parents attending parent meetings.
3. Parents volunteering time in the classroom.

The last stage, classified as involvement, demonstrates

1. Beginning decision-making by parents for classroom and center.
2. Parent decision-making in the Head Start program.
3. Parent involvement in a statewide policy council.
4. Parent involvement in other community agencies and institutions for change.
5. Pursuit of change for all people in the community.

In other words, true parent involvement exists when the parent will not only work for his own concerns and problems, but will look around and work for others more fortunate or less fortunate with their problems.

As trainers for the Head Start program, we asked ourselves, how could we begin to open the opportunity for parent involvement? With a key staff person? The parent involvement coordinator? Why? This person must be positively convinced that parent involvement is necessary in order to implement a successful program serving children. This person must be the facilitator and stimulator for parents, other staff, and community in the whole idea of "parent involvement."

A series of workshops were designed for parent involvement coordinators to better train them in the concept and role of the parent involvement coordinator, the stages of parent involvement, and techniques for working with and training both parents and staff in this overall goal. Communication and listening skills, group work methods, and actual problem solving were major training activities requested by the coordinators. This was a beginning in making the big step back to their own local setting.

THE PARENT COOPERATIVE SCHOOL

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Whether a school is called a parent cooperative or not, the schooling of a child is a cooperative adventure between parents and school personnel for the members of a community. An essential ingredient of an effective education for a child is communication among parent, teacher, and child. This is especially true for the young child. The parent cooperative concept of pre-primary education is an example of the ultimate in parent involvement and education. Cooperation and communication between and among the school's clients and its professional staff are at their highest level in a parent cooperative.

The parent cooperative is a unique educational adventure that includes two populations--parents and children. Parent cooperatives emerge as a result of parent initiative wherein they utilize their energy, planning, and participation in an effort to facilitate the basic processes of democracy. The basic characteristics of parent cooperatives are the parents' involvement in the areas of organization, business matters, and the education of the children and themselves.

In 1916 the first cooperative nursery school was founded in Chicago by a group of faculty wives interested in securing social education for their children and parent education for themselves.

Later in 1920 several other cooperatives were formed in Massachusetts, New York, and California.

The most rapid and extensive program was in Berkeley, California, where the public schools were involved to the degree of paying teachers' salaries and establishing parent education classes. In 1941 Seattle public schools began training parents to operate "cooperative play groups" which were incorporated into the family life education program of the public schools.

Other states that have initiated and developed parent cooperatives are Michigan, Virginia, New Jersey, Connecticut, and the District of Columbia. Although a few of the cooperatives were and still are aided by public funds or private endowments, most of them are totally self-sufficient.

Parent cooperatives usually begin with a maximum of six to eight families who are interested in providing what young children need for their growth and learning and knowing more about how they can contribute to this process. This initial core of parents frequently enlists the assistance of PTA officials, clubs, churches, and the news media to publicize the organization in order to stimulate and elicit the interest of others in the community.

To plan for parent education, the involved parents usually meet several times a week for in-service training in the form of lectures, discussions, demonstrations, and workshops. A qualified teacher is always present; and group leaders may be a school principal, social worker, rabbi, doctor, minister, or a judge of juvenile court. Universities and public schools also aid in preparing parents for participation in cooperatives by offering related courses and workshops.

The parents' education is continuous. Even after the initial preparation in education, each mother spends at least one day per week in the classroom assisting the teacher. This provides parents the opportunity to learn with and through their children which is the most stimulating, effective, and satisfying form of parent education. Katherine Taylor states, "When parents do not learn along with their children, the value of preschool education is cut by half or even more."

Election of officers and the establishment of various committees is the next stage to insure success of the cooperative. Some possible committees are parent education, parent participation, fund-raising, constitution, budget, newsletter, supplies, health regulations, trips, equipment and supplies, and membership. Each cooperative determines its needs.

In order to help insure smooth operation of the cooperative, it is imperative that careful consideration and planning be given to the area of finance. Estimation of initial costs and drawing up a monthly and yearly budget will alleviate the likelihood of unexpected expenses. As a means of securing the initial funds, most groups charge a registration fee as well as design and implement such fund-raising projects as rummage sales, bazaars, carnivals, shows, parties, raffles, dances, and fairs. Each family also pays a monthly tuition which is normally enough to meet the monthly operating expenses of the organization. The amount of monthly tuition is determined by the monthly operating expenses. It may range from nine dollars to 60 dollars per month.

Finding a suitable teacher may constitute a major problem. The significance of the teacher in a parent cooperative is of paramount importance because she is responsible for the education of both

children and parents in the classroom situation. It is imperative that the selection of a teacher be given careful consideration.

The qualifications of the teacher who usually has directorship responsibilities also are greater than for the teacher in the traditional pre-primary classroom. In addition to having experience and education in early childhood, the teacher must be a mature person with the following traits:

1. Should like to work with parents and children
2. Should be skilled in group relationships
3. Should have a real understanding of the enjoyment that can be experienced by parents and teachers working together
4. Should believe in the values of cooperative nursery schools
5. Should be willing to
 - a. Recognize the value of parent participation in the nursery school program
 - b. Facilitate change and grow with the school
 - c. Encourage and respect parents' contributions
 - d. Make use of the services of a consultant selected by her and the parents' group when needs arise
 - e. Continue in-service training
6. Should be aware of her abilities but able to recognize and face her own limitations

Self-evaluation is a necessary ingredient for continuous growth and development of the cooperative. Some groups accomplish this by spontaneous conversation during weekly meetings while others have adopted a more formal procedure. Whether informal or formal, this evaluation encompasses discussion of the adequacy of the total program as it relates to parent-teacher relationships, parent-child relationships, teacher-child relationships, parent education, parent cooperation, equipment, and housing facilities. It includes an overview of what has occurred, how effective it is, and what improvements can be made. Empirical research comparing children's learning and development in the parent cooperative to the non-cooperative was difficult to find in the

literature; however, the positive impact the cooperative has had upon children and the community is evident in numerous studies.

The Cross-Cultural Family Center in San Francisco began as a direct outgrowth of parents who wanted a school which would provide opportunities for children and parents representing a wide range of racial, economic, and cultural groups to plan and work together. Under the directorship of Dr. Mary B. Lane, San Francisco State College, and the persistent cooperation of parents and teachers, the Center became a reality. The involvement of commitment of parents and staff made the Family Center successful. The children who participated seemed to be without racial or class prejudice. Children gained a total of nine IQ points on the Stanford Binet over a three-year period, and similar gains were noted on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and the California Social Competency Tests. Parents became more open-minded in accepting members of other social, economic, and racial groups as friends. Data indicated that mothers achieved significant gains in the areas of child rearing, social competence, adaptability, intergroup acceptance, and use of community resources. Further, Center parents influenced many other families with their increased understanding through open meetings, social affairs, and parent membership in various community organizations. Parents' understanding of their children increased as well as their ability to handle child-rearing problems.

Closer to home, the Memphis State University Early Childhood Education Children's School was incorporated into the University's teacher education program through the direct efforts of the parents of the Highland Preschool Cooperative, Inc. A group of parents assumed the responsibility of operating a preschool which had been privately

owned and which in their opinion had a quality program for children. The school operated in the usual cooperative pattern with the parents assuming total responsibility for budget, policies, finances, purchases, maintenance, employment of teachers, etc. Each participating family was required to serve on a committee and to assist the teacher in the classroom. The educational program for the children and the parents was the teachers' responsibility. Pre-service training sessions for parents were given at the beginning of each school year. Through daily contacts with parents, in-service training was continuous for parents and teachers throughout the year.

The most exciting aspect of the parent cooperative from this author's viewpoint as a former director-teacher of the Highland Pre-school Cooperative was the growth of understanding that developed between teachers, parents, and children. Many articles have related the benefits of a cooperative for parents and children, but most only allude to the benefits for the teachers. The bonds of mutual respect, trust, and friendship become so strong that they last for years. To see an overprotective mother allow her "baby boy" to climb to the tree house eight feet above ground while restraining herself is a revelation in the struggles of parenthood. To hear a parent express her anxieties about her child and then to observe those tensions relax as the months pass is a lesson in patience. To hear a father, after assisting the teacher in the classroom, say, "My child isn't so bad after all," is an indication that parents change their attitudes toward their children as they learn more about all children.

To observe a usually unsympathetic parent empathize with a four-year-old whose block house toppled reinforces the concept of

on-the-job training. To listen to the many activities and concerns of parents and to know the sacrifices they make to provide a quality educational experience for their children reinforces the view that parents do want the best for their children. Indeed, parents send their children to nursery school or kindergarten for a quality educational program, not to get rid of them so they may have more time. Teachers gain in understanding of children and parents by working side by side with the parents. Having parents question teaching methods and decisions forces teachers to support their beliefs with facts, not opinions.

Most preschools today are unable to have a parent cooperative because of the large number of mothers who work. However, the concept of the parent cooperative should be incorporated in every school for young children. That concept includes the view that parents have the right to know what is happening to their child during a school day.

As mutual understanding of each's responsibility, role, and concern grow and as parents and teachers attempt to reach the same goal, a quality education for children and trustful attitudes toward each other develop. For the teacher, the atmosphere of warmth and trust generated through the cooperative endeavors lets her know that the textbook concept of education can work.

There seems to be no reason why the bonds of mutual trust and understanding cannot be established in every school setting. To assure this, the teacher and the school must extend themselves to parents. The school staff must assume major responsibility for the establishment of the relationship. Positive attitudes toward parents and their influence upon their children must exist. A teacher must sincerely

believe that every parent, regardless of race, color, economic level, creed, or ethnic group, can make a contribution to the school, to the children, and to the community. There are many school-related tasks that parents can perform without ever coming to school. Parent cooperativeness is developed by parents having a role in the decision-making process; it is not developed by school personnel telling parents what they must and must not do. Opening the schoolhouse doors to parents almost insures better relationships between parent, teacher, and child.

The parent cooperative is a symbol of democracy at work, because it is through the working relationship that a common goal is reached--an effective, quality educational program for the young child.

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THE PARENT-ESTABLISHED SCHOOL

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So many things have happened to me recently which relate to parent involvement that the speech I had planned to make has changed. I am still going to talk with you about the parent-established school I worked with, but I also want to share some other experiences which are changing my thinking about parents in schools. I hope that you are also having experiences which are making you look again at your feelings about the roles of parents in the schools.

Years ago teachers seemed to feel that the less parent involvement in the schools, the better. Just stay out of the professionals' way and let them do the job they were trained to do. There seemed to be parents who "did not care" about their children. I do not believe now that there are parents who do not care. There are parents who show their care in strange (to me) ways, but I have never worked with a parent who did not care about his child.

When I started teaching almost 20 years ago, it was in a day care situation where children from all over the northwest end of Washington were brought by bus into Maryland. Except for "graduation" and open house a couple of times a year, parents and teachers never saw each other.

After a year of this, I taught public school kindergarten for several years. With a class of 35 children in the morning and 30 more

in the afternoon, I knew few parents well. I knew well only the very protective mothers. Most of the others let their kindergartners walk with older children to school. Home visits sometimes evolved but were not encouraged.

About eight years ago, while I was teaching public school first grade, parents worked in the library and clinic and at the annual carnival but knew that they were not really welcome in the classes.

But since that time we have had civil rights, women's lib, and student revolt. (I have just been reading The Soft Revolution by Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, who wrote Teaching as a Subversive Activity. The Soft Revolution is a student handbook directed toward high school and college students who want to know how to change the system.) These movements which have allowed blacks, women, and students to be heard have helped establish a climate where parents will be heard. Educators will have a choice of aiding parents who are really involved in the school or of having this involvement forced upon them.

I also recently read The School in Rose Valley, A Parent Venture in Education. This private school was started in Pennsylvania in the 1920's and survived the depression years because of parents who cared. It makes me think of our school.

Public school parents are wanting and seeking change. Ellen Lurie is a mother who fought the New York City system and has written How to Change the Schools, a handbook suggesting militant maneuvers which can bring about change.

A mother in Reading, Pennsylvania, has become so influential that she and a parent committee have veto power over candidates for the position of director of the school system. This power is such heady

stuff that candidate after candidate have been unacceptable. In the meantime there is no director. This same mother wants to take the "T" out of PTA.

When the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) met in Minneapolis in 1971, I saw slides of the new St. Paul Open School, which looked so interesting that I later visited it. This school has 450 students (with 600 on a waiting list drawn from all over St. Paul), kindergarten through twelfth grade, in a four-story warehouse. Parents, students, and staff make decisions, even though it is a part of the public school system. Parents, students, staff, and people from the community teach classes. The German class was taught by a boy who had lived in Germany. The candle-making class was taught by a student. A poster invited all those interested in taking Greek to sign below. The class would be taught by a volunteer from the university and was open to any age student.

A group of parents in Nashville, Tennessee, have been meeting since March to start an alternative school which will be a part of the public system. Support from the administration has been secured. I am involved in this project as a parent and an interested professional. Some other parents from this project have been discussing this alternative in the group meeting about public schools.

Last fall, soon after school opened, our ten-year-old son said at dinner one night, "My feet are too big." He is right; they are. He is built like his mother, but I do not like his feeling that his feet are too big when he is just ten. It does something to his self-concept. When I asked why he felt that his feet are too big, he said that his teacher wanted a straight line to the cafeteria. To achieve this goal, each

child was to fit his feet to the same block of tile all the way down the hall. His room happened to be at the far end of the hall, and only by walking duck-footed could he fit his feet on the squares. Of course, I knew she just wanted a straight line, but what he heard was, "Make your feet fit inside these blocks." I want someone teaching my son who is better able to communicate with him and who has goals that are closer to his goals and my goals for him. For this and similar reasons he and I became involved in the planning for an alternative to the traditional school, but one which can be a part of the public school system.

Another experience which has changed my feeling about parent involvement is what occurred in an advisory committee to the Department of Public Welfare. For several years I was a member of this advisory committee which met about two hours once a year and was advised of what the department had done. Then federal guidelines required that 50% of the committee be recipients of services. I wondered how AFDC mothers, foster care parents, disabled recipients and others could make any difference when a committee of various professionals had made so little. The first meeting with the new members made me see the difference. When family planning was discussed and a nineteen-year-old mother of six with no husband talked about family planning, she had been there. She provided with poor grammar very graphic details which made the rest of us understand how it really is.

That advisory committee has become a headache to the commissioner. He receives letters, delegations, and suggestions. The commissioner rarely misses a quarterly meeting now; the previous commissioner did not come for more than greetings. Now the commissioner and many of the

department's staff come because the committee is making a difference.

Another experience which has changed my feeling about parent involvement came at the time President Nixon was threatening to veto the Comprehensive Child Development Bill last fall. I went on a radio show which had questions called in by the listeners. The great concern that many of those people had that this bill would allow for the "Sovietization" of America's children could best be answered by the provision in that bill for a policy making board made up of 50% parents, not any parents, but parents of the children in that particular center.

Another fact that has influenced my feeling about parent involvement is being a parent. This too makes a difference.

Now I want to talk about the parent-established school that I know, Nashville Child Center. It grew from American Child Centers, Inc., which had the usual parent-center relationship. We insisted that parents go all the way in with their children upon arrival and that they go to the children and their teachers again when they were picked up. We felt that contact with the receptionist was not enough. There were parent newsletters and group meetings at night, and parents were encouraged both to participate with the children and to use the observation loft as often as possible. Since most of these were working parents, we had some small meetings at lunch. Parents came on their lunch hour and had lunch at the center while we met. Sometimes it was to discuss expectations for first grade. One very successful luncheon meeting was set up to share with parents the ways their children were being taught math concepts. This turned out to be a very good way to do staff in-service on math materials, too. As the staff gathered blocks, art materials, table-setting equipment, cuisenaire rods, peg

boards, beads, songs, gerbils, etc., it helped us see the integration of math and so many other things happening in the center.

When American Child Centers went broke, parents and staff had expected the company to be sold as a child center and that our decision would be whether or not we philosophically agreed with the new owners sufficiently to continue there. Last September I was suddenly told that the property had been sold to Easter Seal for a school for handicapped children and that parents needed to find a new place for their children by November.

Until this time parents had seemed content to pay tuition and let the staff run the school, but we had a parent meeting and told them that the staff and I were willing to try to continue operating a center but we would need their help and we wanted to set up a non-profit corporation.

That night they formed parent committees to find property and financial backing, to negotiate a lease with Easter Seal, to form a non-profit center, and to organize telephone and fund-raising committees because staff had a full-time job teaching the children.

They insisted on meeting every other week until some of these details which could insure continued operation were completed. They formed a board which included a father who was an attorney and did the legal work free with another attorney who was a friend of the school. Another board member was a father who was Associate Dean of the Graduate School of Management at Vanderbilt University. He oversaw the financial planning. A mother who taught child development at Peabody and another who taught psychology at Tennessee State University also served on the board. A father came to me and said he thought he could help us; until

then I had not known he worked with foundations getting money for Vanderbilt.

Other parents have run garage sales and concerts, painted the basement of an abandoned elementary school which we leased, helped build a treehouse, donated typewriters and adding machines when ours were stolen, and are now planning toward a first grade and later other grades.

When the September parent meeting was held 100 children were enrolled in the center. On Christmas Eve we moved and 90 children were still enrolled. Not all of these were the same ones that met in September. Some parents were not able to make the move from a plush new building in a neighborhood of \$60,000 homes to the basement of an abandoned public school in a neighborhood that is all black now. It was "too far" for many parents and some staff, even though it was five minutes from the other center.

For those who did make the move, parent-school relationships changed. After two years of being "Mrs. Kendall" to most of these parents, I was Earline. You cannot stand on a street corner selling garage sale stuff most of a Saturday and continue being "Mrs. Kendall" and "Mr. Ferguson." It quickly becomes Earline, Scotty, Donnie, Penny, and Mike.

Parents under these circumstances begin to see school problems from a new perspective. They begin to feel responsible, to become empathetic, and to offer support (financial, time, concern, interest). Both parents and staff began to know the children a new way and to see trust building between parents, children, and staff. One mother said, "I never would have gone looking for this kind of school, but I have enough sense

to know a good thing when I see it."

This school's parent involvement has been a very positive thing for the school and the families that it serves, but parent involvement is double-edged. When we allow people to make decisions, we must be able and willing to live with their choices. People do not always make the choices we would make for them. Their goals are not always our goals. Parents may demand punitive discipline or graduation from kindergarten exercises. In I'm OK, You're OK, Thomas Harris points out that there is a child, a parent, and an adult in each of us. In working with parents we may not always be able to locate their adult self.

By sitting on both sides of the desk, as a parent and as an administrator, I have felt all of these at times in both roles: supported, threatened, interested, unutilized, valued, concerned, and engaged in real communication. Parents are ready to be involved. Our task is to know how to best accomplish this in each situation.

THE PARENT AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOL

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In preparing for this presentation, I made certain assumptions about you, the audience. I assumed you would be teachers or parents or like myself, a teacher who is a parent (or a parent who is a teacher, depending on your orientation for the day). I assumed you would be attending this workshop because you are interested in having the latest information on parent involvement because 1, you want to try it with your program, 2, you have been trying it and don't feel particularly successful) or 3. you have been trying it and do feel particularly successful.

Over the past decade I have observed three very interesting phenomena which relate to parent involvement in the education process:

First, lower class mothers, due to an upsurge of interest in and research on their children, started reading and listening to comments about themselves. They learned from the voluminous reports which the "Bigivings" published that their children were deprived and that they were primarily responsible for this deprivation.

Second, middle class mothers, due to the interest in and research on the lower class child, started reading and listening to comments about themselves and learned that they were expected to be doing far more with their child than they were doing.

Both sets of parents, to me, reflected the frustrations of the era.

Both attempted to find ways of compensating for what they regarded as their "deficiency." The lower class mother worked hard at trying to emulate the middle class mother. The middle class mother worked hard at trying to emulate the middle class mother myth. Then came a startling revelation to both sets of parents--little Johnny and little Susan, poor or affluent, black or white, still was not "making it" in school. "Making it" can be translated as learning to read, maintaining an increase in IQ scores, or developing a set of creative, adoptive behaviors. (How it is translated depends upon the goals and/or sophistication of the parent doing the translating.)

The results were the third and what I regard as the most healthy phenomenon: parents started making demands on the schools. Parents started standing up all over the country and saying, "We will do our share, but we are not willing to accept the entire burden of this overwhelming task." Parents also started saying, "We will listen to you and follow your direction, but we will have some input into the decisions that affect our children and their future."

This statement of my observations is a very simplistic way of looking at very complex issues. Many parents are yet uninformed and unappreciative of the parenting skills which are needed to give their children a good start in life. Many parents are yet uninformed and unappreciative of the kinds of input they can make to the professional educators. Many professional educators are yet uninformed and unappreciative of the need to include parental input in their program planning. That is what workshops like this one are all about.

The panel which I have put together today represents what I feel to be three alternative ways of looking at parent involvement with the

schools.

Mrs. Geraldine Brooks is a parent from the first study done by DARCEE, the Demonstration and Research Center in Early Education at Peabody College in Nashville. This program was not a part of the public schools; however, I feel the mothers in this program are now making an impact on the schools as a result of their experience in the DARCEE program. The DARCEE approach as originally conceptualized represents a kind of Phase I involvement with parents. This involvement is characterized by initiation from the professionals, control by the professionals, and decisions from the professionals or, to generalize a bit, vertical interaction. The focus at DARCEE has been helping the parent, primarily the mother, see herself as an educational change agent for her child and, carrying it a step beyond, a social change agent for the entire family.

The project which I am currently responsible for represents a second kind of parent involvement. The Metro Schools Early Childhood Education Project is a planning project. The proposal was written by a parent. We have an advisory board composed of members of the community, both professional and lay persons. The program will be a community model. Decisions will be made by the parents and children as well as by the staff. The program was initiated by the parents and is to a great extent controlled by the professional staff. Decision-making is fairly cooperative but tipped in the direction of the professionals or, to generalize, a semi-horizontal interaction.

Mr. Walter Vesper is a parent who I feel represents a third type of involvement with the schools. Mr. Vesper is one of the leaders in a group called the Alternative Schools Planning Group. The group has as

its main objective the establishment of a school which meets the educational needs of their children. The focus is on individualization and community resource-based curriculum. The group is committed to remaining within the domain of the public schools but is equally committed to maintaining equal input in the making of all decisions which affect the school. This project I would describe as parent initiated and parent controlled. Decisions will be made cooperatively by parents and professional staff.

Thus I am aware of three types of involvement: parent training, parent-initiated and staff-directed activity, parent-school cooperative. Let's take some time now to give you the opportunity to ask questions or make comments regarding either or all of these projects.